

Message Text

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ACTION EB-07

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 OES-05 SS-15 H-02 CAB-05 CIAE-00

COME-00 DODE-00 DOTE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00 FAA-00 PM-04

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: EAIR, FR, UK, US

SUBJ: CIVAIR: FRENCH PRESS REACTION TO HOUSE BAN ON CONCORDE

REF: STATE 300002

1. HOUSE VOTE BANNING CONCORDE FOR SIX MONTHS RECEIVED WIDE PLAY IN FRENCH PRESS OVER WEEKEND. AS LUCK WOULD HAVE IT, THE VOTE ON DEC. 18 COINCIDED WITH DELIVERY THAT SAME DATE OF FIRST CONCORDE TO AIR FRANCE.

2. LE MONDE, LE FIGARO AND LE QUOTIDIEN DE PARIS GIVE HOUSE VOTE FRONT PAGE TREATMENT. L'AURORE AND LES ECHOS CARRY RELATIVELY BRIEF STORIES ON INSIDE PAGES. L'HUMANITE FEATURES STORY ON BACK PAGE, BUT GIVES PERHAPS BEST STRAIGHT FACTUAL ACCOUNT WITHOUT ANY EDITORIALIZING.

3. ALL NEWSPAPERS NOTE THAT THE DIE IS NOT YET IRREVOCABLY CAST, E.G., CONCORDE WOULDN'T HAVE BEEN OPERATED AT THE EARLIEST ANYWAY TO NEW YORK BEFORE "EARLY MAY", HOUSE BAN DOES NOT APPLY TO DULLES, HOUSE BAN MUST STILL PASS THE SENATE AND THE PRESIDENT, AND IN THE MEANTIME DOT DECISION IS UNCLASSIFIED

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STILL AWAITED AFTER SECRETARY COLEMAN'S PUBLIC HEARING JAN. 5.

4. PIQUE IS MOST EVIDENT IN LE QUOTIDIEN DE PARIS ARTICLE AND IN LE FIGARO STORY FROM ITS WASHINGTON CORRESPONDENT JACQUES RENARD. LE QUOTIDIEN IS CRITICAL OF HOUSE FOR STOOPING TO "PROCEDURAL DELAYING TACTICS" AND COMPLAINS THAT US DEBATE OVER CONCORDE IS NOT ON VERY LOFTY LEVEL. EVEN NIXON-POMPIDOU/HEATH LETTERS ARE SEEN AS BEING OF EQUIVOCAL VALUE. CONCLUDES LE QUOTIDIEN: "ALL THIS COMEDY HAS BEEN GOING ON FOR AN IMPRESSIVE NUMBER OF MONTHS. CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS, WITH HIS LITTLE WOODEN SHIPS, TOOK LESS TIME TO REACH THOSE FABULOUS SHORES THAN WILL BE THE CASE FOR OUR LITTLE MARVEL THAT HAS TO SEEK 'PERMISSION'."

5. RENARD ARTICLE IN LE FIGARO CITES CONCORDE AS SUBJECT OF "MAJOR DISCORD" THAT IS NOT FACILITATING ATLANTIC UNDERSTANDING. IT TOOK US ABOUT AS LONG TO DISCOVER THE ENVIRONMENT AS IT TOOK FRENCH AND BRITISH TO BUILD THE CONCORDE, NOTES RENARD, WHO THEN ADDS PETULANTLY THAT US ENVIRONMENTALISTS NOW PRETEND CONCORDE WILL CAUSE CANCER "WHEN ONLY A WEEK AGO THEY DISCOVERED THAT THE BACON THEY HAVE FOR BREAKFAST IS CARCINOGENIC." ARTICLE THEN REPORTS INTERVIEW WITH LANSALOT-BASOU OF FRENCH EMBASSY, WHO CONTINUES DISPUTE US INTERPRETATION OF NOISE DATA AND CLAIMS SEE "PLOT" BEHIND ALL THE DIFFICULTIES CONCORDE IS ENCOUNTERING IN THE US. RENARD ARTICLE CONCLUDES WITH INTERVIEW WITH FITZHUGH GREEN OF EPA, WHO IS QUOTED AS SAYING THAT RUSSELL TRAIN REMARKS BEFORE CONGRESSIONAL SUBCOMMITTEE COULD HAVE GIVEN WRONG IMPRESSION ABROAD AND ACTUALLY EPA STUDY ON CONCORDE IS NOT YET COMPLETED.

6. LE MONDE EDITORIALIZES THAT WHILE CONCORDE IS NOT A SUBJECT OF EAST-WEST RIVALRY, IT IS SOWING DISSENSION IN THE WESTERN CAMP, AND FOR EACH PARTNER HAS BECOME AN AFFAIR OF STATE. SERVING US POINTS IS A MATTER OF LIFE AND DEATH FOR CONCORDE, AND SO THE DEBATE BECOMES MORE ACRIMONIOUS AND NO HOLDS ARE BARRED. BUT SHOULD THIS COME AS ANY SURPRISE? INSTEAD, CONTINUES LE MONDE, WHAT IS ASTONISHING IS THAT THE EUROPEANS SEEM TO HAVE THOUGHT "THEY COULD DAZZLE WITHOUT HAVING TO CONVINCE." LE MONDE THEN NOTES: "WHILE ONE CAN ARGUE OVER DECIBELS, WHAT NO ONE CONTESTS IS THAT CONCORDE IS NOISSIER THAN ANY OTHER TRADITIONAL KIND OF AIRCRAFT," AND US ENVIRON- UNCLASSIFIED

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MENTALISTS, "WHOSE ASS-POWERFUL ROLE IS SOMETHING OF WHICH EUROPE IS UNAWARE," ARE NOT GOING TO ACCEPT CONCORDE WITHOUT BITTER DISCUSSION.

7. MIDWAY IN THE EDITORIAL, HOWEVER, THE TONE CHANGES. LE MONDE WRITES THAT AFTER KISSING ITS OWN SST PROJECT FOR FINANCIAL REASONS USG OBVIOUSLY WASN'T ABOUT TO FAIL REACT WHEN IT WAS A QUESTION OF ADMITTING CONCORDE: "WHATEVER IS

DONE WITHOUT US IS DONE AGAINST US, THE AMERICANS SEEM TO BE IMPLYING, ACCUSTOMED AS THEY ARE ALWAYS TO BE AT THE TOP OF ANY HONORS LIST, ESPECIALLY IN THE AERONAUTICAL FIELD." AND, NOTES LE MONDE, UPCOMING US ELECTIONS ALSO MAKE IT EASIER FOR CANDIDATES TO KEEP THEIR DISTANCE FROM A PROBLEM AIRCRAFT. "THAT BEING SAID," CONCLUDES LE MONDE, "IT WOULD BE SURPRISING --AND SCANDALOUS-- IF WASHINGTON, DESPITE ALL THE PRESSURES TO WHICH IT IS SUBJECTED, REFUSES TO LET CONCORDE INTO THE UNITED STATES. ATLANTIC SOLIDARITY, AS MR. KISSINGER HAS WELL UNDERSTOOD, REQUIRES THAT A COMPROMISE BE FOUND -- PERHAPS A PROVISIONAL TRIAL AUTHORIZATION, FOR EXAMPLE-- WHICH WILL MAKE IT POSSIBLE TO SAVE THE INTERESTS OF THE EUROPEANS AND THE TRANQUILITY OF THE AMERICANS."

8. IN ITS FINAL REMARKS LE MONDE ADDS THAT CONCORDE HAS A DIVISIVE EFFECT EVEN IN EUROPE, WITH FRANCE CRITICIZING THE UK FOR LESS THAN SPIRITED DEFENSE OF CONCORDE AND OTHER WESTERN EUROPEAN COUNTRIES, MAINLY FRG, MAKING CRITICAL REMARKS ABOUT CONCORDE (E.G., RECENT PUBLIC STATEMENT BY LUFTHANSA PRESIDENT THAT HE WOULDN'T ACCEPT CONCORDE EVEN IF OFFERED TO HIM AS A GIFT.) LE MONDE DISMISSES IN THESE TERMS ROLLS-ROYCE SPECULATION ABOUT POSSIBILITY OF CONSTRUCTING NEW GENERATION, LARGER CONCORDE: "BETTER GET THE LITTLE MODEL INTO THE AIR BEFORE DRAWING UP PLANS FOR THE BIG ONE."

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